JEWISH FAIRY TALES AND STORIES

TRANSLATED · AND · EDITED · BY

GERALD · FRIEDLANDER

Jewish Fairy Tales and Stories

Translated and Edited by Gerald Friedlander

All the stories in this little book, except the first, "The Black Dwarf," have been collected from various Jewish writings. No attempt has been made to give a literal translation, but the stories have been retold without losing any of their atmosphere or meaning.

Something of the spirit of Israel lies concealed in these old Jewish legends, so that once read they are unforgettable.

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JEWISH FAIRY TALES AND STORIES

TO

MY CHILDREN

AND

ALL THE CHILDREN OF MEN

Jewish Fairy Tales and Stories

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
GERALD FRIEDLANDER

With eight illustrations by
B. HIRSCHFELD

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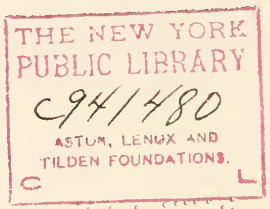

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PREFACE

ALL the stories in this little book, except the first, have been collected from various Jewish writings. No attempt has been made to give a literal translation. The stories have been retold in a modern setting. Some of them may possibly recall a few well-known tales and parables. Most of them are original, and on that account of more than passing interest, apart from their intrinsic value. Something of the spirit of Israel lies concealed in the old Jewish stories. It is the earnest hope of the present writer that a little of this spirit will be found to be revealed in the following pages.

G. F.

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The Black Dwarf

The Black Dwarf. [*Frontispiece*

Jewish Fairy Tales

THE BLACK DWARF

THERE once lived long, long ago, in some happy land, a Jew named Samuel. He was most pious, but, as so often happens with the good, he was unfortunately very poor. He had an aged mother to keep, as well as a charming wife and two sons. He dealt in cheap second-hand old clothes. His scanty earnings barely sufficed to enable him to make both ends meet. It often happened that the family had neither meat nor vegetables from Sunday to Friday. He generally managed, however, to find sufficient money to procure a substantial meal of fish, meat and wine for the Sabbath. His object was to honour the holy Day of Rest in accordance with the good old Jewish custom.

In spite of his extreme poverty he was always ready to share his frugal fare with those less fortunate than himself. Jew and Gentile were always welcome at his table. He was a man of principles which he strove to put into practice.

One of his rules was never to spend quite as much as he earned. Another was never to lose heart, so much so that he was wont to exclaim on sundry occasions: "If God should help me and make me a man of means, I will help others to get on in the world."

It happened one Friday morning, when he was going his usual round, that he saw himself all of a sudden confronted by a dwarf with a very long black beard. The little man was dressed in a smart black suit. He was closely examining the bundle of old clothes on Samuel's arm.

"What have you got there?" asks the dwarf.

Samuel replies: "Old clothes for sale."

"What is the price of this suit on top, which I see is black?" queries the dwarf.

Samuel answers: "The price is ten shillings. I cannot afford to take less, but if it should please the good God to help me and to make me a man of means, I promise to give you an entire suit free of charge."

"So be it," cries the dwarf; "I agree to purchase this suit for ten shillings. I am sorry to tell you that I do not happen to have all that money about me just now. I will, however, give you half a crown as a deposit. One day I will call on you and pay you the balance. Mean-

while please be good enough to keep the suit for me, for it is now mine. Do you agree ? "

" Most gladly," replies Samuel, who put forth his hand to receive the half-crown.

The next moment the dwarf was no longer to be seen. " Well, I never ! " said Samuel. " I have never seen such a funny little fellow, all in black, with such a long beard, and then to disappear just as suddenly as he crossed my path. Very strange ! Most peculiar ! "

Samuel looked hither and thither for him, but all in vain. " He must be lost in the crowd of passers-by," he said to himself. He then reminded himself that he knew neither the name nor the address of the dwarf, but he remembered that he had promised to call for the suit and to pay the balance. As an honest man, Samuel naturally refused various offers which were made to him by several of his customers who desired to purchase the little black suit. His reply to each one was, " It is sold already." One customer even offered to pay twenty shillings for it, but in vain, for he was not to be tempted.

It was still early in the day when he had lost sight of the dwarf. Normally he would continue to work till an hour before the Sabbath came in. That day, however, he began to feel tired and worn out before noon. The bundle of clothes on

his arm seemed to him to grow heavier and heavier every minute. "I must get home quickly," he said to himself; "I must not lose a moment, for I cannot stand the strain. My poor arm will break."

When at last he reached his house he cast down the bundle, which fell on the floor with a heavy thud. He told his wife what had happened to him, and the reason of his early return. "I sold," he added, "the old black suit for ten shillings; it cost me only four shillings, because it was so small. I have done a good stroke of business to-day, thank God! I feel most grateful to our Heavenly Father for His never-failing mercies."

Now, there are times when a modest and unassuming man finds genuine consolation in forgetting for a while his daily occupation. Such a man loves to shut his eyes on the real world as he knows it and to think for a moment of another world, and to dream of things that might come to pass if kind fortune would but smile on him. As an offering of thanksgiving Samuel resolved to spend the coming Sabbath with greater joy than was his usual wont. He told his wife that for once in a while he would do the shopping and buy the food for the Sabbath. "I shall also invite as many poor people as I can find," he

added; "they shall share our meal this evening."

Away he went after he had had a good rest, and came to the butcher. He ordered a large rib of beef to be sent to his home. "I will pay," said he, "for it now." He tendered the half-crown to pay his bill. This was the piece of money which he had received from the dwarf. The butcher took the coin, and lo! it was a sovereign, a real golden coin. He naturally gave Samuel the correct change. The latter observed that he was receiving much more than he expected.

"Do not give me more than I am entitled to receive," he remarked.

"Leave that to me," said the honest butcher.

Samuel then went to the baker's shop and bought bread. "How much do I owe you?" he asks.

"Tenpence," replies the baker.

"Good," says Samuel. He opened his purse and took out a shilling, which he placed in the baker's hand.

The baker beheld a sovereign in his palm, and exclaimed: "I must give you nineteen shillings and twopence change."

Samuel took the money, and although he marvelled greatly, he said nothing. The same miracle happened in all the shops he visited, with

the result that not only did he obtain the best of everything he needed for the Sabbath meal, but he also found his pockets full of change. The dwarf's half-crown had suddenly made him a wealthy man. The miracle was by no means exhausted. For he found on his return home, when he began to empty his pockets, that as soon as he had emptied them, lo! and behold, they were full again. This pleasant experience kept him very busy for a long time.

At last the hour of the Sabbath came near and he had to hurry to get to the Synagogue in time. Whilst on his way he was delighted to think that he had filled a large box with the coins. When he came to the House of Prayer he thanked the Almighty Father of Mankind with heartfelt gratitude for the great wealth so suddenly bestowed upon him. "Make me worthy, O Lord," he said, "to use this wealth aright, so that I may find grace in Thine eyes and in the eyes of all who see me." After the conclusion of Divine Service he sought out the poor people and was very happy to take all of them home with him.

After the termination of the Holy Sabbath he began to count his money. He was again exceedingly surprised to see golden coin in the box which he had filled with silver coin. "This is

simply marvellous!" he exclaimed. He then went to the corner of the room where the old clothes were piled up. He was about to take up the black suit belonging to the dwarf in order to pack it up, when it seemed to him to be slightly moving.

"This is perchance due to the wind," said he. But he found that the windows and the door were shut. He now put his hand on the black coat and he was startled to find it warm, and at the same moment he felt his own hand being very gently gripped by another hand. He tried to release his own hand, but he could not do so until he had lifted up the entire suit, which seemed to shape itself upon the figure of the dwarf, who now stood before him dressed in the black suit.

"Peace be unto you, good Samuel!" cries the dwarf; "you surely recognise me, do you not? I have just come in for a moment, as I promised, to fetch my suit. I thought I might as well try it on now I am once here. See how excellently it fits me. I could almost imagine it was made to order and cut to measure. I am very well satisfied with my purchase. and I am now quite ready to pay you the small balance I owe you."

"Stay!" whispers Samuel, with a slight tremor in his voice, "what is the meaning of all this? The half-crown you gave me last Friday

morning has grown into a fortune. At last I am wealthy—see, there is more money here in this box than I ever expected to possess. Take it back, good little friend; it is really yours."

"Nay," interrupted the dwarf, "I lend you all this money as long as you remain modest, pious and charitable. It is your wealth as long as you know how to use it as it should be used, and as long as you do not suffer it to be abused by yourself or by your children. If it be squandered or hoarded it will disappear." The words were barely uttered before the dwarf had vanished, and Samuel felt the empty suit of clothes falling across his arm.

He seemed almost stupefied, and passing his hand over his eyes he began to ask himself: "Am I dreaming? Truly our life is but a dream, and we feel most happy when we dream. All this business is very strange. I wonder how it will all end?" He then sat down in order to think matters over. Innumerable plans arose in his mind; he resolved to do this and to do that with his money; above all, he made up his mind to engage at once competent teachers to instruct his children, whose education had hitherto been somewhat neglected by reason of his dire poverty. He also resolved to find a more comfortable dwelling appropriate to the position in life in

which his wealth now placed him. He then arose and filled his purse and set out to distribute its contents among the poor in the streets. On his return home he determined to assemble his family and to tell them all about his newly acquired wealth and the plans he had formed.

After he had told them all that had befallen him, his mother turned to him and expressed her great surprise that he should have allowed himself to be trapped and misled by the Evil One. She said: "O my dear son, know that the dwarf is Satan, and all that he has given you is accursed. Go and give away all the money to the poor, and we will be quite content to live as hitherto. Were we not all quite happy, even though we were sometimes hungry? Does not our Holy Bible tell us to avoid witchcraft and magic? Is not all this miracle but a piece of magic? All that has befallen you, dear son, is the work of witchcraft. Do you not see that I am right? Speak, dear Samuel."

"Yes, dear mother," cried he in fear, "I have ever striven to honour you and to obey you. I shall not fail now in doing my duty. I see, of course, the serious mistake I have made in having traffic with Satan. I will not trust him again, and as for his wealth, I do not want it; let him

take it away. And now I will do exactly as you have bidden me."

Samuel's wife and the two little sons were too astonished to say a word. They also began to fear that the Evil One had bewitched them. Meanwhile Samuel was betaking himself to his store-room where the money was, and when he came there a fresh surprise awaited him. The box was quite empty—the money had vanished. He immediately ran back to his family and told them that a new miracle had taken place.

"I came," says he, "to the store-room to take the money to the poor, and lo! the gold had disappeared, the box is empty, and I cannot explain what it all means."

"Did I not tell you," exclaims his mother, "that the Evil One had tricked you? First of all he gives you silver, then he changes it into gold, and finally he takes it all away again."

"Look!" cried the children in terror. "Who is that strange little black man at the door?"

They all turned towards the door, and there stood the black dwarf, with a kind smile across his little face.

"Do not be afraid of me, good friends!" said he. "I am neither Satan nor a friend of the Evil One."

"Who are you, then?" said the old lady.

"I am one of God's little messengers," he replies, "sent by the Holy One, blessed be He, to reward the honest and industrious. Your beloved father, dear children, is a pious and charitable man. And you, good woman, his mother, do not for a moment believe that he would have traffic with the Evil One. 'Tis true I gave him great wealth, and 'tis true I have taken it away again because you had no faith in the power of God to hear the cry of those in need. I will at once restore all the money if you all agree to use it properly. Now do you agree?" And they all said: "Yes."

He then called to the younger of the two sons and said to him: "Just sit on my knee whilst I bless you." The little boy came to him and sat on his knee. He kept quite still whilst the dwarf was blessing him. After a while he began to play with the long black beard of the dwarf, when all of a sudden it fell off.

"Oh, dear me! What have I done?" he cried.

"Never mind," said the dwarf, "a new one will soon grow again." Whilst they were all looking at the dwarf, lo! a new beard grew there and then.

"Keep my beard," said he, "as a memento. It will remind you of a good friend, and now I

must be off; so farewell till we meet again." The dwarf vanished and they all gathered round Samuel, asking him to see if the money had been restored. They all went to the store-room, and sure enough the box was full of golden coins.

The rich Samuel then took a large house, and his family came to live there as soon as it was ready for them. One room was set apart, as it was to be used as a Synagogue. On the walls the following inscriptions were to be read: "Be diligent, honest and true"; "Remember the poor"; "Fear evil and love the good"; "Seek peace and pursue it"; "Love God and thy fellow-creature." Samuel put the beard of the dwarf in a small cabinet in an adjoining room, the key of this room being entrusted to his wife's care.

Samuel and his family gathered together in their Synagogue every morning and night to praise their Heavenly Father and to thank Him for His lovingkindness. They did not forget the dwarf's instructions. The poor were always received most kindly in their house. Every deserving case was dealt with in a sympathetic manner.

His wealth became the talk of the town. In time he received a summons from the king to

come to his court. His genuine modesty and consideration for others endeared him to all who met him. The king counted him among his friends and frequently consulted him. "Let me serve you, most gracious sire!" said Samuel to the king, "and also the country where I live, and you will make me the happiest of men." He was variously employed on different occasions, and his ability enabled him to discharge his difficult tasks with complete success. The more he gave away in charity, the richer he grew. He never accepted any remuneration for the services he so gladly rendered on behalf of his king and country. His disinterestedness marked him out among his fellow-citizens.

As the years went by the sons grew up. They did not by any means come up to the standard expected by their parents. In time the elder son, Mark, left home and went abroad. His father had given him a large fortune on his departure, but he had soon squandered every penny of it. He wrote home to his father asking for further help. Samuel sent him the same sum he had originally given him, and he wrote to warn him that he was not carrying out the agreement which the dwarf had stipulated. He added: "Money is to be used and not abused. Unless you mend your ways you will not prosper."

Within a year this son met his death whilst engaged in wicked frivolity.

Dan, the other son, remained at home, but his conduct was so very unsatisfactory that his mother took it so much to heart with the result that she became seriously ill and ultimately died. Her death was followed by the passing away of the aged grandmother. Samuel now sent for his son and said to him: "Alas! my son, your evil conduct has brought your dear mother to her grave. I know that my days are also numbered. I shall soon be with her and you will be alone in the world. You will inherit all my wealth. I bid you remember how it all came to me in one day; it may also depart in one day. You gamble, you have evil companions who follow you for the sake of gain. You despise the poor, and I grieve to think you forget God. Repent, my son, now whilst the opportunity presents itself. It may be too late to-morrow, since there is no man alive who knows when he may be called from this earth. I cannot help you if you will not help yourself. Now go, and see if you cannot change your conduct."

With these words ringing in his ears, the lad left his father's presence and at once betook himself to his evil companions. He told them of the interview which he had just had with his

father. They persuaded him to think that all would eventually be well, since he was the only son and heir. They even reminded him that one day he would possess the immense fortune of his rich father. Within the next few weeks the father died.

With the death of Samuel, the glory and honour of his name passed away. The immense wealth, of which everybody was speaking, also seemed to vanish. Dan found life unbearable in his father's large house. He allowed it to be neglected, and the doors were shut. The poor knocked in vain and went away unanswered. Dan gambled day and night. He became more reckless than ever. Ill-fortune seemed to dog his footsteps. Failure and disappointment were marked across his path. "Might-have-been," said his father's friends, when they saw him pass.

The lucky star of Samuel had set, never to rise again. At last Dan resolved to actually risk all he possessed in a last mad gamble to regain all his previous losses. He again lost and found himself penniless. Remorse began to touch his heart. He hurried home and threw himself upon his bed. He wept till he could weep no more. He then began to think of the many charitable deeds of his father. He also remembered the black dwarf. "To him will I make my last

appeal," said he to himself; "he helped my father and he will surely not refuse to assist me."

He sprang off his bed and ran to the little Synagogue in the house. He had not been there for such a long time—it all seemed so strange. He began to pray for help, and promised to behave better in the future if his prayer were answered. In the stillness of the holy place he seemed to hear his mother's voice whispering in his hot ears: "Work, work." "Ah!" cried he, "am I to work and help myself? What's the use of praying?" He then felt a key being pressed into his closed hand. He took it and left the Synagogue. He thought that the key might fit a room where, unknown to him, a portion of his father's wealth might be stored. He tried to fit the key in the various locks in the different rooms, but it did not fit any lock. At last he found a door at the end of a passage. He tried the handle and found it locked. He then put the key, which he held in his hand, in the lock, and it fitted exactly.

He unlocked the door and entered a large room. At one end there was a cabinet. His eyes gazed around looking for the piles of gold, but all in vain. On the wall facing the door he saw something gleaming, but when he came nearer he recognised the dwarf's face with the

long black beard. He quickly turned round to escape the piercing look of his penetrating eyes, and he heard shrill laughter coming from the cabinet. He went nearer, and saw in it the black beard of the dwarf which he had pulled off when he was a little boy. He put his fingers in his ears to deaden the mocking laughter. He turned round again and saw on the wall opposite a fiery inscription which read: "Reap the reward of folly." The letters almost burnt his eyes.

"Away! Away!" he cried in terror, and he ran to the entrance. He found the door closed and locked.

"What is this," he shrieked, "here in my hand?" He looked and exclaimed: "It is half a crown. Well, this is lucky! I was just now penniless, and now I am like my wonderful father—with a lucky half-crown to start my fortune."

"Not quite so quick, wicked spendthrift!" cried a little voice. "See, I am your dead father's old and true friend. You have squandered all his fortune which I lent him. I now come to you to demand the return of all the wealth I lent. This half-crown which I just placed in your hand is to remind you that you do not even possess this very small amount. Reap the harvest you have sown." Without

another word the dwarf—for he it was who was speaking—snatched away the half-crown and vanished. Dan fell to the ground in a faint, and at that moment the house of Samuel shook and fell in.

The Giant Og

Og was sitting on the wall with his feet reaching the ground;

THE GIANT OG

IN very ancient times, long before the Flood, there lived a very mighty man, one of the men of renown, named Shemchazael. He had two sons named Og and Sihon. The latter was the younger, and was born at the time of the Flood in Noah's ark. Og was one of the tallest giants ever known. His height equalled that of seventy men. His appetite was enormous, and he could easily swallow a thousand oxen at one gulp; and as for his drinking capacity, he would think nothing of drinking the contents of a hundred flasks of wine at a meal. Og refused to sleep on a wooden bed, for he knew that it would not be strong enough to carry his weight. He therefore had an enormous bed made of iron; it was so large that a hundred men could easily have slept in it. When he walked he covered three miles at a step.

In his early days he had heard Noah telling the people to repent, as otherwise the good God would send a flood to destroy them. When the flood came the waters almost reached up to his knees, and he betook himself as quickly as he

could run to Noah. When he came to the ark he found that the door was closed. He therefore sat down on a piece of wood under the gutter of the ark. He then called to Noah, who refused to allow him to enter the ark. "But," he roared, "I shall die of hunger if you do not feed me." Noah replied: "I will feed you daily if you will swear to be my servant for ever." He there and then swore to Noah and to his sons that he would be their slave for ever. Noah then bored an aperture in the ark and he put through it food for him, and he was kept alive in this way whilst Noah was in the ark.

After the flood Og went to Sodom, one of the wealthiest cities in the world. In this town every need of daily life was supplied without any trouble. The dust of the city was of gold, precious stones were in abundance. The men of Sodom were cruel and very wicked, but they did no harm to Og, for they were afraid of him. They ill-treated Lot, the nephew of Abraham. Then some neighbouring kings attacked Sodom and took Lot captive. Og hastened to Hebron to inform Abraham of his nephew's plight. Og says to himself, "I feel sure Abraham will at once set out to save Lot. He will, I hope, be killed, and then I shall be able to wed his beautiful wife Sarah." "Thy wish," responded Divine

Justice, "shall not be fulfilled. As a reward for telling Abraham of Lot's misfortune thou shalt live for another five hundred years. Thy punishment for thy evil desire to possess another man's wife is thy doom, for thou shalt die by the hand of Moses, the descendant of Sarah and Abraham."

When Abraham returned from his victorious battle with the kings, he looked at Og and asked him what he would have done had the victory been on the side of the kings? "Say, I had been killed," exclaimed Abraham. "Well, I should have married Sarah," replies Og. "Did you not wish me to die in battle or to be taken captive? Speak, for I am a prophet, and I am able to read your thoughts," says Abraham. Og made no reply, and when Abraham rebuked him he became so furious that he gnashed his teeth in temper and one fell out. Abraham had a large ivory bed made out of Og's tooth, and he used it all the rest of his life.

Og was one of the guests at the banquet given by Abraham on the day when Isaac his son was weaned. Og had often foretold that Abraham would not beget children; he had even called him a sterile mule. The guests teased Og and asked him: "What do you say now, Giant Og? Is it not a fact that Abraham has begotten a son?"

" What I say," he roared, " is that Isaac is no true descendant of Abraham, since I could kill the weak baby in a moment by merely touching him with my little finger." The voice of Divine Justice resounded in his ears and he heard the words : " Thou art an impudent braggart ! Fie upon thee ! As a punishment for thy foolish words thou shalt live to see a hundred thousand descendants of Abraham and Isaac who will come to fight thee and thy people, and thou shalt be defeated and perish in shame."

When Isaac's son Jacob came to the land of Egypt, the king asked that the Hebrew patriarch should come to see him. When Jacob entered the palace of Pharaoh he heard the people ask : " What will Og the giant say when he sees Jacob and his descendants ? " Jacob came before Pharaoh and blessed him. Then the king turned to Og and said to him : " Didst thou not foretell that Abraham would have no seed, yet here before us stand Jacob and his seventy descendants, all the seed of Abraham ? " Og in shame held his peace. But the sneer infuriated him, and in his wrath he cast an evil eye upon the children of Israel. Again he heard the voice of Divine Retribution crying in his ear : " Thou shalt yet fall into the hands of their descendants."

After these events Og journeyed to the lands

west of the Jordan. Here he became king. He owed this piece of luck to a magic coat which he had stolen from Nimrod, king of Babylon. This wonderful coat had originally belonged to Adam and Eve after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. When Og put on this coat all the beasts of the field came and prostrated themselves before him. The people saw this, and thought this was due to the power of his might. Moreover, they were mightily afraid of him and thought it best to ask him to be their king and protector. He consented, and made the people build sixty new cities in his kingdom.

He was one day terribly upset to learn of the death of his only brother Sihon, king of the Amorites. It came about in this wise. The Israelites, who were the descendants of Abraham, sent messengers unto Sihon, saying: "Let us pass through thy land; we will not turn aside into field, or into vineyard; we will not drink of the water of the wells: we will go by the king's highway until we have passed thy border." But Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border: but he gathered all his people together and went out against Israel into the wilderness, and he fought against Israel. And Israel smote him with the edge of the sword and possessed his land. When the news of the

disaster reached Og he was staying in his palace at Rabbah. He became very alarmed at the prospect of having to fight the Israelites. He thereupon called his nobles together and bade them meet him at his fortress of Edrei.

Og knew that his prowess and renown counted for next to nothing in the eyes of the mighty Moses who had led the Israelites when they encountered Sihon. True it was that Og was a man of gigantic stature, but all his people were not by any means as tall as he was. Even if the Israelites considered themselves as grasshoppers when compared with his people, nevertheless the issue of battle depended on something more powerful than human might; it rested with the God of battle as to which side should win. Og remembered the voice of Justice which he had so often heard.

When Moses and the Israelites came to attack Og at Edrei it was nightfall. Next morning Moses and his men were ready at dawn to begin the attack, but when he looked at the wall of the city he exclaimed in great surprise: "See now, they have in the past night built a new wall around their city!" When Moses came nearer he found that he had not seen clearly owing to the morning mist. There was no new wall, but only the legs of Og who was sitting on the wall

with his feet reaching the ground below. Moses was somewhat taken aback at the huge size of the giant. God, however, said to him: "What avail is the enormous stature to the giant, when I have decreed his destruction? Fear not, only be strong and of good courage." The Israelites then began the attack, whereupon Og with one hand uprooted a huge mountain and hurled it against his foes. In the nick of time this was intercepted by Moses, who pronounced the Holy Name of God. Later on, when Moses was not looking, Og uprooted another mountain three miles in length. The cruel giant intended to crush all the Israelites beneath it by hurling it upon their camp. Whilst he was carrying it upon his head a swarm of ants burrowed through it so that it fell with a sudden blow upon his neck. He began to try to lift it up, but in his terrific exertion his teeth began to grow, and pushed out to the right and left of his mouth, like tusks of an elephant and thus the mountain was kept in its place on his neck. As soon as Moses saw this he took an axe ten ells in length and jumped upwards ten ells so as to be able to reach Og's ankles. He dealt him a mighty blow so that he fell, and then Moses quickly cut off his head. Long after his death a grave-digger said that he had once hunted a stag which fled into

the hollow thigh-bone of Og. The stag was pursued three miles before it reached the end of the bone. The conquest of this powerful giant lingered long in the imagination of the Israelites as one of the chief exploits of their beloved leader and lawgiver Moses. The whole of Og's kingdom was assigned to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half-Manasseh. This was the story of the greatest of the giants. It was believed that Goliath was one of his descendants. He also, in his turn, was slain by David, a descendant of Abraham.

Babylonian Talmud, Niddah, 61a, Berakhoth, 54b; Gen. Rab. xlii. 8; liii. 10; Deut. Rab., 125.

Chapters of R. Eliezer, ed. Friedlander, pp. 112, 167.

The Luck of Nahum

Nahum in the Emperor's palace.

THE LUCK OF NAHUM

NEARLY nineteen hundred years ago there lived a great master in Israel named Nahum. He dwelt in Gimzo, a small town in the Holy Land. He counted among his disciples the celebrated Akiba, who died a martyr's death in the year 135 C.E.

Nahum was called by his friends "Ish Gam Zu," which corresponds to "The Lucky Man." The exact meaning of the words is, "The man of this also." This nickname arose from Nahum's habit of exclaiming, "This also is for the best," on every occasion when good or evil fortune befell him.

Now it happened that the Jews had to send a present to the Roman Emperor. At this period the Jews were no longer their own masters. Judea was part of the Roman Empire and its inhabitants were forced to pay tribute to their imperial master. The elders of Israel met and asked one another: "Who shall be our representative to go to Rome to see the mighty Cæsar? Whom can we trust as our messenger to convey our gift to the Emperor?"

The majority voted for Nahum of Gimzo; they said: "Can we find anyone in our midst more suitable?. Do we not know that our Heavenly Father has wrought so many miracles on his behalf?" It was finally agreed that Nahum should be their messenger. The elders went to inform him, and found that he was living in a wretched hut; the walls were almost tottering, and it seemed as though the roof would collapse. "Will not your house fall in?" they exclaimed in alarm, as they were about to cross its threshold. "It will not fall in," replied Nahum, "as long as I am beneath its roof. Have no fear, good masters! we are perfectly safe in this my humble home."

"Come now, good Nahum, listen to us," they began; "we come to you from the priests and the scribes, and see what we have brought with us. This golden casket is full of most precious jewels. Take it to Rome and deliver it to the Emperor as a tribute from our people. Plead with him and his counsellors to remit our burdens, and to suffer us to rebuild the Temple of God on Mount Zion. Go in peace, and may the Lord prosper your way."

"This also is for the best," exclaimed Nahum in accepting the casket. "I will gladly do as you bid me, and may it be the will of Heaven that

my journey may bring comfort and peace to our unhappy people."

Without delay Nahum set forth on his journey. At sunset he resolved to find a lodging for the night, as he did not think it safe to travel after dusk, as he was alone. He came to an inn, and after he had partaken of a frugal supper he went to bed. Whilst he was fast asleep the host entered Nahum's bedroom and opened the casket. After he had taken out all the valuable contents, he refilled it with earth which he had taken from under the threshold, and closed the casket again. He then left the bedroom without disturbing the tired sleeper.

Nahum slept well and arose in the early morning, feeling quite refreshed and happy. He opened the casket, and to his intense astonishment he found that it no longer contained the glittering gems and precious jewels; all he could see in it was moist earth. "Strange!" said he; "but this is also for the best." He paid his host for his night's lodging and supper, and without a word about the jewels he departed and continued his journey to Rome.

In due course he arrived at his destination. He was permitted to enter the palace in order to bring the gift to the Emperor. When he was conducted to the imperial presence, he was

surprised to find that the Emperor was seated on his throne without anyone else being present. The Emperor received him with marked contempt. He averted his gaze and said: "Son of Judea led captive! what dost thou bring from the land of thy fathers?"

"I bring a precious casket, O mighty Cæsar!" said Nahum, making an obeisance.

"'Tis well spoken," continued the Emperor. "Now tell me, what does it contain?"

"Originally when I received it," replied Nahum, "it contained most beautiful gems, priceless jewels."

"Well?" interrupted the Emperor.

"Dost thou know, O great Cæsar," continued Nahum, "that the imperial police suffer thieves to be innkeepers in the Roman Empire? Consequently the valuable jewels which were in this casket have been stolen and replaced by moist earth. Yet methinks this is not quite as bad as it might have been had the thief also stolen the casket."

"Stop thy prattle!" cried the Emperor in a terrible rage. "You Jews are making sport at my expense, but, by all the gods of Rome! you shall find out that it is a very costly thing to mock a Cæsar. I will avenge myself by having an edict issued, and in it I will decree that all

the Jews in Palestine shall perish by the sword."

"If God so wills," exclaimed Nahum, "this also is for the best."

At that second Nahum was very astonished to see at his side a distinguished-looking man, dressed in the toga, the mantle worn by the senators of Rome. In reality it was Elijah the prophet in the guise of the senator. Elijah is always at hand in the hour of danger and distress. He comforts and helps when human hearts need consolation and encouragement.

"Sire!" began Elijah, "I have most important matters of state to discuss with you. Your troops have again suffered a reverse. Let me beseech you not to act too hastily with this Jew. Perchance the moist earth in this beautiful casket is no ordinary earth. It may be earth from the land of Abraham, the so-called Holy Land. It is said in ancient records that he possessed land the dust of which became like swords, darts and arrows. The Scriptures of the Jews tell us that 'He will make the dust as His sword and the driven stubble as His bow' (*Isa.* xli. 2). Now your Majesty's imperial troops have been fighting for three years across the Danube, yet victory is as far off as ever. Why not try the efficacy of this moist earth? It may perchance

help your brave legions to gain the long-desired victory."

The Emperor listened with intense interest to every word spoken by the senator, as he was thought to be. His advice seemed to be most reasonable, and the Emperor told Nahum to retire and to await further instructions. The imperial generals were forthwith commanded to make use of the moist earth brought by Nahum in their next attack. Complete success crowned their efforts, and the victory was won.

The happy Emperor sent for Nahum and told him how pleased he was with the valuable gift sent by the Jews. He promised to protect them and to remit half of the annual tribute. As a further mark of his gratitude he instructed the imperial treasurer to fill the pockets of Nahum with gold and silver coin. He thereupon dismissed Nahum with every mark of honour and favour.

On his homeward journey Nahum came to the inn where he had been robbed. He was cordially welcomed by the wicked host, who with a sly twinkle in his evil eye asked his guest how he had fared on his trip.

"My journey," replies Nahum, "was a complete success. Of course I knew it would be so, for did I not say when I arose after my

night's rest in your house, 'This is also for the best'?"

"But tell me," said the roguish host, "what did you take to the great Cæsar in Rome? Why did you find favour in his eyes?"

"Listen!" cries Nahum. "I brought to Rome that which I took away from here, good host. Now let me have a morsel of bread and honey and I will continue my journey."

After Nahum had departed the wicked innkeeper ordered his servants to pull down his inn and to remove the precious earth on which it stood. He had this earth most carefully packed in large boxes and placed on a strong cart. He took it to Rome and demanded an audience of the Emperor. When he was admitted he told the Emperor that he had brought a large supp y of the wonderful moist earth, just the same as Nahum had brought in his casket.

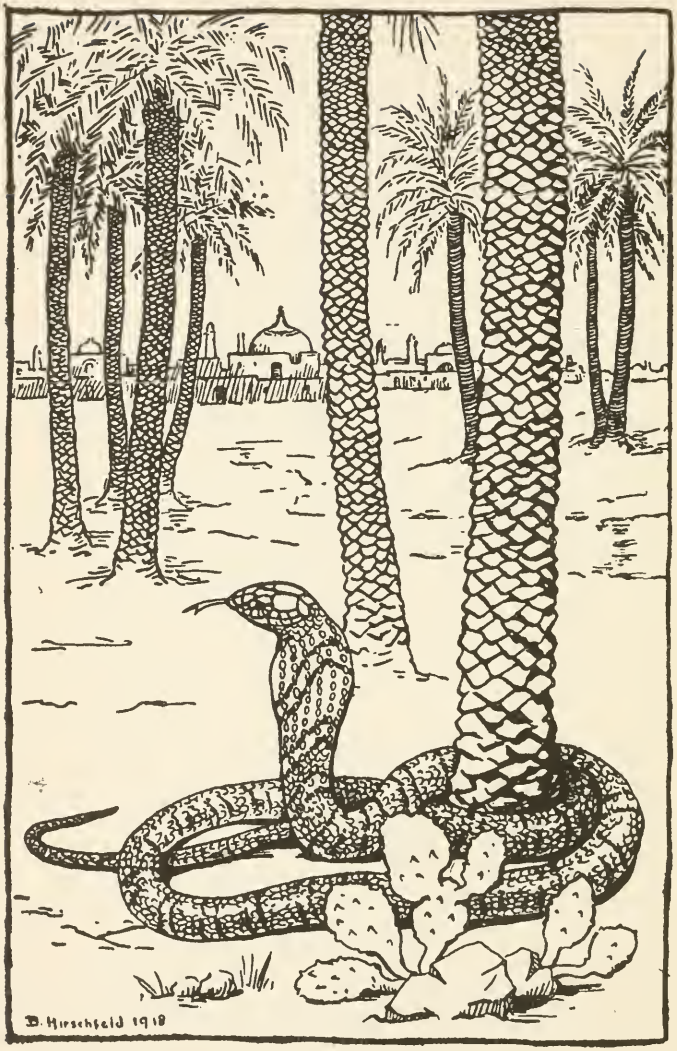
The Emperor ordered his servants to test the earth, which was found to be just ordinary earth, without any miraculous qualities. When informed of this fact the innkeeper was cross-examined. "How do you know that Nahum's casket contained earth?" asked the Emperor. "I confess," cried the wretched innkeeper, "that I robbed him, and it was my hand that placed moist earth in the casket." "Traitor!"

thundered the angry Emperor; "you have robbed me and not the Jew, for the precious gems in the casket were intended to be presented to me as a gift from the people of Israel. To rob the Roman State or the Emperor has for its penalty death, and you will meet your doom in accordance with the laws of justice."

Three days later the wicked innkeeper was crucified, as prescribed by the laws of the Romans. When Nahum heard of his fate he exclaimed: "This also is for the best."

BABYLONIAN TALMUD.
TA'ANITH, 21A.

Head or Tail



Once upon a time there was an enormous snake.

HEAD OR TAIL

IT often happens that little children think that they are wiser than their parents. The young imagine that they know better than their elders. Just as sensible would it be for the new-laid egg to try to teach the chicken. Once upon a time there was an enormous snake. It happened one day that the tail said to the head: "Pray tell me how long wilt thou take the lead? I should so much like to change places with thee." "Good," said the head; "thou shalt be leader for the rest of the day and I will follow thee. Now lead on, Master Tail." On it went, and the rest of the lengthy snake followed with the head at the rear. All of a sudden there was a terrible splash, the whole body of the large snake fell into a cistern of water which was in a ditch. "Now where are we?" cries the head in a state of alarm. "Where has that blind tail landed us? Well, I must get out of this, as otherwise we shall be drowned, tail, body and head." Once again the head led the body and the tail followed, and out they all came from the cistern. The tail again led the way,

and after a while it moved right into a bonfire which some boys had kindled in the road. As soon as it felt the burning fire it cried to the head: "Clever Mr. Head, please get us out of this horrible fire; I really did not see it, otherwise I should have avoided such a nasty thing." Once again the head led the body, and the tail was glad to follow and to escape out of the cruel fire. "Well," said the head to the tail, "hast thou had enough? Dost thou still wish to take the lead?" "Well," replies the tail, "let me have one more trial; I think I know all about it now." "Very well," said the head, "and now lead on." Away they went, and all was well for a few minutes. "Help!" suddenly shrieked the tail. "I am in a thorn-bush and it hurts terribly." On and on it fell with the enormous body pressing it down. Even the head was caught by the thorns and received nasty scratches. "This is too bad," cried the head. "It's all thy fault, Master Tail!" "No," retorted the tail, "it is all thy fault, Mr. Head. Thou shouldst have remained the head and not allowed me to take thy place. Hadst thou done this all would have been well."

DEUT. RAB., i. 10.

The King's Servants

THE KING'S SERVANTS

THERE was once a king who had very many servants. One day when he felt very happy he called all the servants to his presence and gave to each one a most beautiful coat, made of the finest material, fit for the king himself. "Take these gifts," said he to them, "and notice that each coat is spotless and new." They thanked him very much for his great kindness, and bearing their gifts across their arm they left the royal presence.

Now, some of the king's servants were very wise. They went straight home with their new coats in order to put them away so that they might not be soiled. "We will keep them even as they are now, and when we are called to his Majesty we can put them on," they said to one another. But there were also some foolish servants of this king. They were glad to have these new coats, but they said to themselves: "What's the good of having a nice coat in the wardrobe? When you have something smart and fine, why not wear it?" They therefore put on the coats given to them by the king, and

everybody looked at them and admired them. They went to work in these coats, and kept them on when they had finished their daily tasks. In a short space of time the coats lost their fresh and new appearance, for they were soiled and stained.

After a while the king sent a message that he would like all his servants to return the coats he had given them, as he wished to give them something better in exchange. The wise servants were exceedingly glad that they had taken great care of their gift. They hastened home and took out of their wardrobes their garments. They were brand-new, not a spot to be seen. They put them on and hurried off to the palace. When they came there they met on the threshold and in the courtyard the other servants in their soiled workaday dress. Then they all came before the king, who sat on his beautiful throne, with the glittering crown upon his head. In his hand he held his sceptre and bade the servants welcome.

When the wise servants were about to take off their coats, the king told them not to trouble to do so there, but to go to the royal treasury and to exchange the coat for a better one. "I am well pleased with you, for I see," said he, "that you have been very careful with my gift. You

are worthy of receiving a more precious gift, for you have appreciated what I have given you."

Then it was the turn of the foolish servants to come before the king. "What is this," cried he in an angry tone, "that I see? How dare you enter my palace in soiled garments? You insult me by appearing before me in your stained and filthy coats. Get ye hence at once and betake yourselves to our royal wash-house, and take care to cleanse the coats I gave you. When you have thoroughly washed them you will have to see to it that they are dried and ironed, and then you must come again and bring them to me. I know not now whether I shall be able to accept them. I certainly shall not be inclined to exchange them for better coats, since you have despised my gifts. I feel very hurt that you should not have had the good sense to treasure what I, your king, gave you. In fact, I ought to send you to prison as a punishment, for it is treason to hold kingly gifts in light esteem. Be careful in future and do not offend again." With these words the king dismissed his foolish servants, who left his presence with downcast heads, ashamed of their soiled garments and of their ingratitude.

After a long while the king sent another message to all his servants, saying that on the

next new moon day he would give a banquet and he desired them all to be his guests; there was a condition, however, that each one should bring his own chair or stool, or anything else as a substitute. On the day appointed the king's servants came to the palace, and each one brought something to sit on, either a stool or a chair, or a couple of cushions, or a block of wood or a box. A few even brought a number of large stones. The king looked on with a smile on his face and told the company to be seated on whatever they had brought. The banquet was exceedingly well served, and its duration seemed unduly prolonged to some of the guests. All those who had brought comfortable chairs and stools seemed very satisfied, but the servants who had been silly enough to bring stones and blocks of wood began to grumble because they were most uncomfortable. "Is it quite nice for a king to have guests and not to provide proper seats?" they asked one another. "Is it the correct thing for a king to allow his guests to sit on such seats as some of us are now using?" they inquired of the king's chamberlain. He conveyed their question to his royal master.

The king commanded silence and he arose to speak.

"Good servants, you are my guests and I am

happy to see you here. Some of you, I regret to learn, are not very happy to be here. They complain about the seating arrangements. In reply I feel it necessary to reprimand those of you who have brought unseemly things in my beautiful palace. Blocks of wood, boxes, stones, and such like are out of place in the saloon of a king. I did not bring them here, yet I am blamed for the want of comfort some of you are now experiencing. The fault is entirely your own. Instead of blaming me you should blame yourselves. Have you not heard of the old proverb: 'In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be'? (*Eccles.* xi. 3). 'As a man maketh his chair, so must he sit thereon.'" The guests then held their peace, for each one realised that his comfort or discomfort was entirely due to his own conduct. The banquet came to an end and the king dismissed his guests.

After an interval the king again sent the following message to all his servants: "I intend at some future date to give a banquet. I shall be most happy to have you all as my guests. I expect you to prepare yourselves in a becoming manner; every one should bathe and anoint himself, dress in his best garments and be ready to meet me in my palace." The date was not fixed when the banquet was to take place. The

wise servants of the king immediately went home and prepared themselves for the royal banquet. They even went to the courtyard of the palace so as not to be late at the feast. They said to one another: "Is it likely that our royal master will lack anything requisite for the banquet? He owns flocks and vineyards, and he surely is ready to feast with us at any moment."

Some of the servants, however, were thoughtless, and went about their daily work. It seemed but natural to them that, if the king had not fixed the date of his banquet, it was owing to the fact that he was not prepared, and would not probably be so for some time to come. Great was their surprise at even to hear the king's summons to come there and then to the banquet. "What was to be done?" they asked the royal messenger. He replied: "Come at once, even as you now are."

The palace gates and doors were thrown wide open and the wise servants were brought before the king. He received them with warm and hearty greetings. "Right welcome are ye," he cries; "come and sit at my table, for ye are the first to arrive. Nay, I know that ye have been waiting for many hours to be admitted. I am delighted to see you, and I notice how splendidly you have prepared yourselves for the feast."

After they had taken their places at the king's table the wine and meat were placed before them, and they began to partake thereof.

After a while the other guests were ushered into the king's presence. They were unwashed, their hair uncombed, their garments soiled and dirty. "What do I see?" cried the king in a furious temper. "Are ye not thoroughly ashamed of yourselves to come in this wise before your king, your master? Is this how you prepare yourselves for a royal banquet? You surely cannot expect me to sit down with you when you are in such a condition. All I can do is to permit you to look on while my good servants at my table enjoy the banquet, and when we have left the table you can consume the remnants. I rejoice that some of my servants are thoughtful and have prepared themselves in time for my summons. As for you, who are so foolish and careless, I am vexed with your indifference, but as you are the ones who will suffer—for you can only look forward to the cold remnants—I will pardon you this time, and pray remember to be always prepared for the call of your king. Who knows when it may come?"

T. B. Sabbath, 153a, and Eccles. Rabbah to Eccles. iii. 9.

A Dream of Paradise

He went to see what was the matter.

A DREAM OF PARADISE

IN the first century of the common era there lived a famous Rabbi in Palestine named Chanina ben Dosa. He was a pupil of the great Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai. Like so many of the Rabbis, Chanina lived in abject poverty. It was said of him: "The whole world is sustained through the piety and merit of Chanina," yet he had barely sufficient for the needs of his daily life. He was married, and his good wife did her best to hide their poverty. Of course, neither the Rabbi nor his wife would beg. They would not even accept gifts from their friends.

One day the wife asked Chanina in a gentle and loving voice: "Tell me, dear Chanina, how long shall we continue to suffer this humiliating poverty?"

"What shall I do, sweet wife?" he asks.

"Pray to God," she replies. "You pray so often on behalf of others and your prayers are heard. Now for once think of yourself and me."

"I do not quite follow," observed Chanina.

"I mean," she replies, "that you should ask

the good God to let you enjoy in this world something of that which is laid up for the righteous and pious in the world to come. Surely God will take pity on us, and hear your petition and answer you."

Chanina loved his wife very dearly. It pained him to see her face pinched by hunger. He therefore resolved to do as she had asked him. He arose and turned his face to the wall of his room and prayed with genuine devotion.

No sooner had he concluded his prayer than he heard a strange noise outside his window. He went to see what was the matter, and behold! there was a hand coming from the heavens, bringing to him a golden leg of a golden table. He stretched forth his hand and took it. He called his wife to see what God had sent to them in answer to his prayer.

"This is a great miracle!" she cried. "You can sell this heavy piece of gold, and with the money you will have enough to purchase all we need as long as we live. What more do we want?"

"Yes," said Chanina, "*that* is the question."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean," he replied, "what will be our fortune in the hereafter?"

"Good husband," she responded, "God will

not suffer those who love Him and keep His Holy Law to want in the world to come. Let us be happy now, and leave the future world to take care of itself."

" So be it," he added.

That night the wife of Chanina had a strange dream. It seemed to her that she was carried far away even into Heaven. The vision of Paradise in the world to come was then revealed to her gaze. She saw not only the good Israelites, but also all the pious and all the righteous of all nations and religions, sitting in bliss and contentment, each one at a little golden table. Each table had three legs. She continued to look around, and lo ! in the centre of Paradise sat her beloved husband, Chanina. He sat at a table which swayed to and fro, for she noticed that it only had two legs.

She awoke in a terrible fright and called to her husband.

" What's wrong, sweet wife ? " cried he.

" I have had," she replied, " a very horrible dream."

When he had heard it, he asked her : " Is it agreeable to you to think that everybody in Paradise should be comfortable with their golden tables set before them, and that we alone should have the misfortune of having a rickety table,

which cannot stand firmly because it only has two legs ? "

" No, no ! " she cries.

" What shall we do, then ? " he asks.

" Pray at once, dearest husband," she replies ; " beseech God to take back the golden leg of our table in Paradise. Far better will it be for us to want in this world so that we may enjoy the bliss of the future world in peace and contentment."

Rabbi Chanina again arose and turned his face to the wall. He prayed as his wife had bidden him. Then he stood at the window, where he saw a hand from Heaven before him. He fetched the golden leg, and it was taken away by the hand beyond.

Chanina and his wife rejoiced more than ever when they no longer possessed the golden leg. They told the miracle to their friends, who exclaimed : " This second wonder is indeed more marvellous than the first wonder; it is the rule of Providence to bestow gifts, but not to take them back."

BABYLONIAN TALMUD, TA'ANITH, 25A.

A Just King

I saw two men carrying something on their shoulders.

A JUST KING

DURING the Middle Ages there were very many Jews in Spain. The kings often employed them as Ministers of State, physicians and bankers. This caused jealousy and ill-feeling among certain classes of the Gentile population. The ill-feeling and jealousy occasionally gave rise to false accusations against the Jews. It once happened that a rumour was spread by two non-Jews to the effect that they had passed through the Ghetto, where the Jews lived, and they saw a Gentile lying dead in the doorway of a house of a Jew, Leon by name. The rumour was followed up by a searching investigation by the police, who actually found the corpse in Leon's doorway.

The incident was reported without delay to the king, who summoned to his presence the witnesses. He cross-examined them, and they stated : " Last night we saw the rich Gentile, whose body has been found by the police, walking towards the Ghetto. He probably had to settle some business with the wealthy Jew banker, Leon. We followed, and we were

startled to hear terrible screams. After a moment all was still. We hurried along to see what had happened, and we were shocked to find the corpse in Leon's doorway."

" Let us send for the elders of the Synagogue," cried the king, " and we shall soon learn what has happened." Whereupon the witnesses left the royal presence.

Messengers were despatched in haste, and before long the Rabbis of the Synagogue were conducted to the king's presence.

" Welcome, O wise men of Israel ! " exclaimed the king.

" How can we serve your Majesty ? " they asked.

" I have sent for you," the king remarked, " to ask you to explain and expound a verse in the psalm-book of Israel. The passage reads : ' Behold, He that guardeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep ' (*Ps.* cxxi. 4). I have been informed that the Hebrew word for ' slumber ' does not imply as much as is conveyed by the word for ' sleep.' So that, unless I am misinformed, it seems that the psalmist wished to say that since God does not slumber He surely does not sleep. Now will you give me your explanation ? "

The Rabbis replied : " The verse is very

simple. It merely teaches us, as our great commentators tell us, that God, who is the Guardian of Israel, never slumbers, and consequently He never sleeps."

"I do not agree," said the king, "and I now wish to give you the real meaning. God does not slumber, and He suffers not others to sleep, since He is the Guardian of Israel. Just listen how I have discovered this interpretation. Last night I could not sleep. I therefore arose from my bed, dressed and went to the window. It was a most beautiful night, just full moon. As I was looking down the street facing the palace, I saw two men carrying something on their shoulders. I did not know what it was, as it was covered with a cloth. I at once sent for three of my personal attendants and commanded them to shadow the two men, and to report to me what it was they were carrying and what they did with it. They have now reported to me that they did as I bade them. The two men were carrying a corpse which they deposited in the doorway of the Jew Leon. The two men are the same who have raised the rumour against the Jews."

"Bring forward the two witnesses," cried the Jews, "and let them face us."

"So be it," said the king.

When the two witnesses came before the king and discovered that they had been watched by the royal attendants, they confessed that they had murdered the victim, and in order to escape detection they had resolved to place the corpse in the Ghetto.

"Had I slept," remarked the king, "these two murderers would have escaped, and they would have incited the mob to attack the Jews and pillage their houses, and many innocent people would have been cruelly massacred. But God, who is just and righteous, guards Israel. He never slumbers, and He does not suffer His servants to sleep when mischief threatens the innocent. I am but an instrument in the hand of God, merely His servant. I rejoice that I have been chosen to mete out justice to the people in my kingdom. In this spirit I understand the words of the psalmist: 'Behold, He that guardeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.'"

SHEBET JEHUDAH, § xvi. pp. 39 f., ed. WIENER.

The Seven Sons

He seized the Princess . . . and flew away . . . in the air.

THE SEVEN SONS

THERE was once upon a time a king who had seven sons. They were named according to the days of the week on which they had been born. The eldest was called Sunday, the second son was named Monday, the third Tuesday, the fourth Wednesday, the fifth Thursday, the sixth Friday, and the youngest Saturday. In time the sons grew up, and were all good-looking, smart young men. They were always good friends, as brothers should be. One day they agreed among themselves to go all together to their good father so as to ask him to permit them to leave his kingdom. They desired to travel abroad with a view of gaining experience and learning something worth knowing. They came to the king and spoke of their wish. He listened, and after a moment's consideration began to say : " This is a very good idea, dear boys ! I quite approve your suggestion except with regard to one point. You all wish to travel. I do not care to let Saturday go with you. You naturally ask, Why ? I will tell you.

I might die, and if all of you were out of the kingdom there would be no one of my house to act as regent." They persisted, however, in asking him to allow all of them to go together. At last he allowed himself to be persuaded. He blessed them and told them to keep in touch with him, and under no circumstance should they quarrel among themselves.

Away they went, quite a merry party. Towards dusk they reached a large inn situated at the corner of one of seven cross-roads. They entered and ordered supper. They enjoyed their meal, for they were very hungry. After a good night's rest they all arose very early in the morning. " See," they said, " we are at cross-roads. Let each one of us take a different route, and let us agree to meet here again this day next year. We shall then report to one another all we have seen and done." They agreed and parted.

On the first anniversary of the day of their separation they all met at the inn. They greeted one another affectionately and rejoiced to find one and all hearty and well. The youngest brother turned to the eldest and said: " Dear Sunday ! will you tell us what you have learnt in the course of your travels ? "

" Of course I will, dear little Saturday," he

replies; "I have learnt a most marvellous thing."

"What is it?" they all cried.

"I have learnt," says he, "to use a pair of spectacles."

"That's nothing wonderful," chimed in Saturday, with a broad smile on his chubby face.

"Isn't it, now?" remarks Sunday. "Well, if you put these spectacles on your nose, little chap, you will be mightily astonished to find that they are the most marvellous in the world. For they enable you to see what's going on anywhere up to five hundred miles."

"That's the limit," they all said in chorus. "We agree that is indeed something of which you can be proud."

"Now," said Sunday to Monday, "what have you got to report?"

"I also have been rather lucky in my experiences," said Monday.

"Come along, out with it," cries Saturday.

"Well," rejoins Monday, "I have learnt to play the fiddle——"

"Is that all?" interrupts Saturday, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"Wait a moment, please," replies Monday; "you are so frightfully impatient. You do

not give me time to finish my sentence. I was about to tell you that I can play a magic fiddle. If you just listen I will describe its magic effect. It sends all strangers to sleep who hear me play. What do you think of that, now ? "

" I think," Saturday answers, " that you have acquired a most useful art." All the other brothers nodded assent.

" What have you discovered ? " said Monday, turning to Tuesday.

Tuesday began : " I suppose you will all laugh when I tell you all about the art I have learnt. It is the art of picking pockets. I can take anything out of another person's hand, be the article small or large, be it held ever so tightly, without that person being aware of what I am doing."

" That is simply marvellous," they all cried.

" Now, Wednesday," says Saturday, " it's your turn to give an account of yourself."

" I think," Wednesday remarked, " I can surprise you all when I tell you what I have learnt to do."

" Well, man, speak ! " interrupted Saturday. " What is it ? "

Wednesday continued : " I can improve upon Tuesday's art of picking pockets, as he calls it. I can put in my coat pocket anything,

be it large or small, size does not count at all ; and no one knows what I have done."

" Well, I never," said Tuesday, " that is really ripping."

" Come along, Thursday," cries Wednesday ; " it is your turn now."

Thursday said : " What I have learnt is a very clever thing."

" Just so," they all cried. " What is this very clever thing ? "

Thursday continues : " All I have to do is to cut off a twig of an oak-tree. I then take it in my right hand and I can beat to the ground any number of men, even if ten thousand come to attack me."

" A jolly fine thing," says Saturday, " in war-time. We must tell dear father all about this. I wonder what they will say at the War Office ? Now, Friday, it's your turn, please."

" I have learnt," says Friday, " to shoot so well that if I aim at a bird's beak anywhere in the air, and if it have a seed of corn in its beak, I shall be able to shoot the seed out of its beak without doing any injury to the bird or the seed."

" You must be a crack marksman," observes Saturday. " And now, if you please, it is my turn to tell you my tale of adventure. I have

discovered how to throw with my right hand anything, even a millstone, as high as you like, till no one can see it ; and I can also catch it again in my left hand."

" We should like to see you do it," they all exclaimed.

" Wait and see," observes Saturday.

" Now," said they to one another, " do not let us return yet awhile to our dear father. Let us first see how we can get on in the world all together. Then we can return home. Meanwhile we can ask our good host to convey a loving message of filial greeting to our beloved father, telling him that we are all quite well and happy." They agreed to do accordingly, and once more they set forth on a great adventure.

They went far into the world, and came to a fine city where they saw a beautiful palace. They rang the bell and knocked at the door, and when it was opened by the butler they asked if they could have an interview with the king. " Please tell his Majesty," said Sunday, " that we are seven princes, all brothers, who desire to see him."

They were admitted, and without delay they were conducted to the royal presence. The king received them most graciously, and in order to show his delight at their visit, he gave

a banquet in their honour. Whilst they were sitting at the royal board, the king asked his chamberlain whether he could find out who they were and what they could do. Of course, kings and princes are superior people, and are therefore expected to do great and wonderful things.

The royal chamberlain ventured to ask them who they were, but he did not like to question them as to their abilities. At the conclusion of the banquet the king arose and began to chat with his guests. Meanwhile the eldest brother went to look out of the window. He put on his magic spectacles and gazed far away. At last he said in a loud voice: "I now see that a wedding is just about to take place. There is the bridegroom, a fine handsome knight, and at his side is the bride. What a funny hand has she—six fingers!"

"Stop!" cried the king; "you see my dear daughter, the princess. One of my knights has carried her off against my will. He has vowed to marry her and I refuse to give my sanction. See now, you seven noble princes, if you restore my daughter to me, she shall wed one of you, and to the rest of you will I give half of my kingdom."

"We agree," cried they, "to your Majesty's

proposal. We will undertake to bring the sweet princess here, and the one who does most to bring this to pass shall be her husband. The rest of us will share amongst ourselves half of your kingdom, just as you have promised."

Away they sped with merry hearts. When they came to the knight's castle they asked if they could see the knight on most important business. They were soon brought to the large saloon, where the wedding ceremony was on the point of being concluded.

Monday produced his fiddle and was about to play when the knight said to the princess, whose hand he was holding, "Look, sweetheart! here are travelling musicians in honour of our wedding."

Monday began to play, and all the company fell fast asleep. Tuesday at once went up to the princess and took her away from the hand of the knight without the latter knowing anything of what was happening. Then Wednesday approached his brother Tuesday and put the sleeping princess in his coat-pocket, without any of the company seeing where she was being concealed.

The seven brothers now left the castle; of course, the princess was still in Wednesday's coat-pocket. They had not left the castle many

hours before they found that they were being pursued. The knight had hastily called together his retainers and mustered about a thousand men. He sent these in pursuit, with instructions to rescue the princess and to punish the seven brothers for their impudence in disturbing his wedding. When the brothers saw the soldiers near by, Thursday ran to an oak-tree at hand and cut off a twig. He then began to beat all the soldiers to the ground. He allowed two to escape in order to report the fate of the rest.

The brothers continued their journey, but after their exertions they began to feel very tired. They resolved to rest awhile, and with the beautiful princess in their midst they sat down under a large tree and all fell asleep. Meanwhile the two soldiers had reached the castle and reported to the knight all that had happened. The sad news depressed him very much. Not only had he lost his charming bride, but nearly all his retainers had been killed. He went for a walk in order to collect his thoughts. Outside his castle he met an old miller, who came forward to speak to him: "Noble knight! Just tell me why are you so sad?"

The knight replies: "Why should I tell you all my troubles? What could you do to help me?"

"Who knows?" says the miller. "There

can surely be no harm in trying to help you, and perhaps I can."

"Well," cries the knight, "listen to my tale of woe." He then told him all about his misfortunes.

"Good knight," says the miller, "do not worry. Within four and twenty hours I undertake to restore your beautiful bride."

"If," exclaims the knight, "you do this, I will give you half my fortune."

"Agreed!" said the miller, who hastened away.

The miller was a magician. He changed himself into an enormous vulture. He flew to the spot where the princess and the seven brothers were sleeping. He seized the princess with his beak and flew away high up in the air. The princess screamed in fright, and her cries awoke the seven brothers. As soon as they saw what had happened, up they sprang. Friday took his bow and arrow and shot at the vulture's beak, so that the princess was thrust out of it without being hurt in the least. At the same moment Saturday put forth his left hand and caught the princess.

When the brothers and the princess at last reached her father's palace, a terrific quarrel broke out among the brothers.

Each one claimed the hand of the princess in

marriage. Sunday began to urge his right by saying : " Had I not looked through my magic spectacles you would never have found out where the princess was."

" True," remarked Monday, " but if I had not played my fiddle you would never have got hold of the dear princess."

Tuesday cried : " She is mine, for who was it who took her out of the knight's hand ? It was your obedient servant. Moreover, the knight was not aware of what I was doing."

Wednesday said : " The princess belongs to me, for had I not hidden her in my coat-pocket she would have been seen by the knight's retainers when we were leaving the castle."

" All correct," cries Thursday, " but I claim the beautiful princess. We should have all been killed had I not cut off the twig of the oak-tree and beaten therewith the soldiers who came in pursuit of us."

Friday chimed in : " The bride is mine, for had it not been for my magic bow and arrow the vulture would have carried her off goodness knows where. I shot her out of the vulture's beak, and I did her no harm in rescuing her."

" Now that you have all had your say, just be good enough to listen to me for a minute, please," cries Saturday. " Now let us be fair.

Is it not right that I should marry the sweet princess? Just consider, what would have been the good of all your wonderful performances if I had not stepped in at the very end? I saved her life and I brought her down to earth. I had hold of her last, and I am the one in possession. You are all fools for quarrelling; did not dear father warn us not to fall out? If I had not caught her she would have fallen to the ground, broken in every bone."

The brothers saw that justice was on Saturday's side, and they agreed that he had won the hand of the princess. The king and the princess approved also. The wedding took place without any delay. The other brothers received half of the kingdom, which they agreed to share. Then they all returned to their father's dominions and visited their beloved father, who blessed them all. He heard their wonderful tale of adventures and congratulated them on their achievements. "It is a lucky thing for all of us," said he, "that I did not die whilst you were all away. Now I am happy in being able to have such a sweet and charming daughter-in-law." They all lived happily for many years, and then they died in peace.

MA'ASEH BOOK (CHAP BOOK), ed. ROEDELHEIM, p. 81A.

The Magic Ring

He untied his steel chain which was about his waist and threw it over the wolf's head.

THE MAGIC RING

IN the wonderful days of long ago there was a famous Rabbi who dwelt in the capital of a little kingdom. Not only was he very learned, but he was also an exceedingly good man. He had a wife, but they had no children. The wife was selfish and wicked; ever ready to quarrel with her husband. It vexed her to see him receiving the poor at his table. He never refused to help a fellow-creature in distress; nay, he often went among the destitute in order to assist them. Fortunately for the poor, he was a man of means, and he spent several hours daily in teaching the Holy Bible to the many disciples who gathered around him. He did not permit them to pay any fees. In fact, he fed them, and very often provided clothing for the less fortunate among them.

"Do you not see," said his wife to him one day, "that we shall not be able to continue for ever to do as you are now accustomed to do? You are not earning a penny, but you are always spending and giving money away. Our income grows smaller and smaller every day,

whilst our expenses are continually increasing. We really only have enough for our two selves."

"Good wife," he answers, "do not begrudge the poor the little I am able to do for them. 'I have been young and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging for bread,' says the Scripture text. Whilst we have we must give, and when we have no more our Heavenly Father will provide all we need." With a smile of contempt on her face the wife left her husband's presence without replying a single word.

In time the warning given by his wife unfortunately came to pass. Their money was exhausted, and she jeered at her husband for his want of foresight in not looking after his own interests. Her bitter tongue gave him no rest, and he resolved to leave home and to go elsewhere in order to try to mend his fortune. He gathered his disciples together and told them of his intention. Many of them agreed to throw in their lot with his and to follow him. Without a word to anyone they left the town quite secretly. The Rabbi's wife was not at all distressed when she found that her husband had left her. The poor came to her door in vain, and they deeply deplored the absence of their generous benefactor.

The Rabbi, accompanied by his loyal followers, went to a neighbouring town, where they were all received with kindly hospitality. After a brief while the Rabbi resolved to move on to another place, as he was unwilling to become a burden to the warm-hearted people of the town. Things went from bad to worse. The Rabbi and his disciples began to look shabby. Strangers looked askance at them, and ofttimes they were thought to be vagabonds or robbers. When it was quite evident that there was no prospect of any improvement in their material position, the good disciples approached their beloved teacher and began to address him, saying: "Dear Rabbi! Pray forgive us for troubling you with a request. Let us return to our families. We ask ourselves daily: What will be the end of all our wandering? We cannot possibly continue to live in the wretched way we are now doing. We are famished, our shoes and clothes are worn bare, we cannot study when we are in such trouble. The best thing for all of us is for each one to return to his home."

The kind-hearted teacher answered them thus: "Dear pupils! I must admit that you are perfectly right in all that you say. I am truly beholden to all of you for your loyalty and untiring devotion to me in my misfortune, sharing

with me all the stress of poverty and bad luck. I cannot for one moment blame you for desiring to return home. Yet let me beg of you to have a little more patience, and to stay with me but one more week. If, at the end of the coming seven days, the good God, whose Holy Name be praised from now to all eternity, deem it best to help us, well and good, and we will all return home together. If, on the other hand, our Heavenly Father in His abounding mercy desire to try us, His will be done, and you shall all return home without any further let or hindrance on my part."

The disciples consented to this proposal without any discussion. Next day the Rabbi requested them to leave him for a while, whilst he proceeded to the woods near by. "I will try," said he, "to think out some plan to help us all in our dire plight." "God be with you," they replied, and he went off alone. Barely had he reached the woods when he saw a little weasel with a golden ring in its mouth. "Now I wonder," says he to himself, "what's the use of a golden ring to a little weasel? If I had it I could sell it and have enough money to feed my hungry friends and myself. It would be sufficient to keep us going for at least a week."

He began to run after the weasel. This

frightened the little thing, and in its haste to escape it dropped the ring. The Rabbi picked it up and looked at it very attentively. On the surface it was quite smooth, but inside the following words were very beautifully engraved :

"For small price was I sold,
My worth is untold gold!"

The lucky finder recognised at once that this was no ordinary ring. "What sort of ring is it?" he mused. "I fancy it is a magic ring, and the one who wears it has only to wish for something and the wish is sure to be fulfilled there and then. Now," said he aloud, "let me just try and see if this be the case. What shall I desire? Dear God, please help me in my poverty and just give me a small purse full of money." The words were barely uttered when he saw in front of him at his feet a purse full of coin. "Now, indeed," he exclaimed, with great joy in his heart and a happy smile on his face, "has God helped us!"

He hastened to tell his pupils that he had hit upon a very excellent plan. "Please ask no questions," says he, "but come at once with me to the next village where a very wealthy man lives. He is our friend, and he will lend me as much money as we require. I will buy new clothes for all of you, and then we shall all return home." They listened to every word with rapt

attention, and refrained from asking any questions. The Rabbi did not think it necessary to tell them about his wonderful luck in finding the magic ring.

They immediately set out for the next village, and he went to see the tailor in the market-place. After a while he called in his pupils, and each one received a new suit of clothes. He also bought a new outfit for himself. He then gave them money to buy plenty of good food, and finally he ordered a large conveyance to take his party home. The disciples thought that the tailor was the rich friend of whom their master had spoken. They asked no questions.

When at last they arrived home they were received with hearty greetings by their relatives and friends. The poor more especially rejoiced to learn that their benefactor had once more come back. The only one who was really disappointed was the Rabbi's wife. " Now," she says to herself, " my time of peace has passed, and I shall see dozens of beggars bothering my husband. They are a perfect nuisance, and they eat so much."

The Rabbi resumed his former manner of life, and gave more than ever to all the needy who asked for help. His liberality puzzled and vexed his wife. One fine day she came to him

and asked him in a sweet and winning voice to tell her a great secret. " What is it that you wish to know ? " he inquires. " Dearest husband," she continues, " just tell me, where do you obtain all the money you are spending so freely ? We were quite recently so very poor and now you seem to be so rich. What does it all mean ? "

" Listen ! good wife," says he. " God has given me a treasure."

" When did He give it to you ? " she asks.

" Whilst I was away," he replies.

" Good," she adds. " But just tell me a little bit more about this treasure ; what kind of treasure is it ? "

At first he tried to put her off by simply refusing to talk about it. " Be satisfied," he urged, " we have the treasure. Leave well alone, I beseech you, and ask no questions." She refused to be satisfied with this attitude, and worried him by day and night to tell her all about the treasure. At last, since he could stand her nagging no longer, he told her the story about the ring.

" Who's going to believe such a fairy tale ? " she exclaimed in a terrible rage. " You just show me the ring," she added.

" No ! " he answers.

Whereupon she said to herself: "If you have a magic ring and I get hold of it, I will never give it back. I will also stop the extravagant manner you adopt in distributing your charity. You seem to have already forgotten that it has brought us once to the verge of starvation."

Day by day and night by night she worried the poor man to show her the ring. He very wisely refused to comply with her wish, for he knew that she would do some sort of mischief if once she gained possession of it. In anger she cried out one day: "I do not believe you have any such ring." This taunt provoked him, and in a moment of excitement he produced the ring. "See," he said, "this is the ring."

She now insisted on looking at it, and begged him to give it to her for a moment.

At first he refused. But she persisted, and nearly drove him mad by weeping and screaming. At last, for the sake of peace, he gave her the ring to look at for a moment. No sooner had she placed it on her finger when she said: "Now I wish my husband to be changed into a wolf and to be off to the woods."

The words were barely off her lips when her husband disappeared, and where he had been standing a wolf stood looking at the window. In a second the beast sprang through it

and ran off to the woods, where he stayed. He was a very fierce and wild wolf, devouring sheep and biting men. All the people in the district were afraid to venture near the woods.

On the day of the Rabbi's transformation into a wolf the disciples came as usual for their lesson ; but the wicked wife told them that her husband had gone away on a very long journey, and she did not expect him back for a whole year. The poor also came, but she shut the door in their face without even giving them any explanation.

Meanwhile the wolf had found a friend in the woods in the person of a charcoal-burner. Whenever he came before the wolf he began to wag his tail and became as gentle as a lamb. The charcoal-burner had a little hut in the woods where he slept. In time the wolf took up his quarters outside the door of the hut. The man gave him food and drink, and all went well with both of them.

The people, however, complained of the damage done to their flocks by the ferocious wolf. At last the nobles of the kingdom consulted the king as to what was to be done. The king listened very attentively to all that they had to tell about the wolf and his doings. After due consideration he issued a royal

proclamation, in which it was stated that "whosoever should bring the wolf, dead or alive, before the king should receive the hand of the only daughter of the king in marriage, and at the death of the king he should succeed to the throne."

One of the king's knights heard of this splendid opportunity of winning fame and a kingdom. He informed the king that he was willing to try to capture the wolf. Without delay he set out and came to the woods. He met the charcoal-burner, and asked him if he could direct him to the wolf's track.

"That, indeed, can I do," said he; "but if I may make bold to advise so noble and brave a knight, to whom I have the high privilege and honour of speaking, I would most earnestly beseech you to retrace your steps and to leave the ferocious wolf alone. He is sure to kill you. If you value your life you will do well to avoid this terrible beast."

"But," asks the knight, "can you tell me how is it that you manage to live here in the woods where the fierce wolf hides itself?"

"I can answer that," replies the charcoal-burner; "I do not try to kill him, and he is a very knowing wolf. It will surprise you to hear that we are, in fact, fast friends."

" This is really very surprising," says the knight.

" Yes," answers the charcoal-burner, " I honestly believe that the wolf is a bewitched man."

" Most wonderful ! " exclaims the knight. " I also will try to become his friend—at least, I will not attempt to kill him. But I cannot return home without the wolf. All the courtiers would laugh at me and make fun at my expense. Just lead me to the wolf and watch what happens." They came to the door of the charcoal-burner's hut, and there was the wolf near by. As soon as the wolf saw the knight he sprang upon him and threw him down to the ground. He was just about to bite him when the charcoal-burner called to the wolf to come away. The wolf obeyed and the knight arose. He now drew his sword to attack the wolf, but the charcoal-burner tried to restrain him. The knight, however, was mad with fury and ran towards the wolf. Again the wolf sprang upon the knight and threw him once more upon the ground. He was on the point of biting him when the knight in great distress cried out : " O God, save me now." Immediately the wolf turned away from him, and the knight once more arose from the ground.

The wolf stood near by and began to wag his tail. He gradually came nearer and nearer to the knight, who was none too pleased to see the wolf so near at hand. "Do not be afraid," said the charcoal-burner, "he is quite friendly now." "Yes," said the knight, "so it seems. Now's my time to try to capture the wolf by gentle means." He untied his steel chain which was about his waist and threw it over the wolf's head. The wolf permitted this with evident pleasure. "Now," cried the charcoal-burner, "you can lead him in safety to the king and your fortune is made."

The knight gave the charcoal-burner a piece of gold as a parting gift, and set out on his return journey with the wolf at his side. When he reached the town the people hastened into their houses, for they were afraid to venture out in the streets. At last he came to the palace and proceeded to the royal presence, accompanied by the wolf. As soon as the king saw the wolf he grew afraid, and asked the knight if it would not be better to have the wolf taken away? The knight in reply said: "Gracious Sire! Do not be afraid of this wolf. He never hurts those who do not seek to hurt him. I will stake my life that no mishap will arise." This satisfied the king, and the knight received the hearty

congratulations of the king and court on having succeeded in his very perilous undertaking.

Preparations were immediately made for the knight's marriage with the king's beautiful daughter. Soon after the wedding the king fell ill and died. The knight was recognised as the lawful king, and was duly crowned with magnificent pomp. He made a tour throughout his kingdom, accompanied by his queen and the wolf.

One winter's day the king went forth to hunt, when he took the wolf with him. The ground was covered with snow. All of a sudden the king missed the wolf, so he turned back and found him writing in the snow. "Well," cried the king in sheer amazement, "did you ever see a wolf able to write?" His retinue looked on in bewilderment and said nothing. The king said to himself: "Perhaps it was indeed the truth when the charcoal-burner said that this wolf is bewitched. Come," said he to his retinue, "let us read what he has written." They all looked at the strange script, but there was not one of them who could read it.

"Let one of you gentlemen," exclaimed the king, "ride to the town and bring back two or three learned men so that we may learn what the wolf has written." When the great scholars

saw the script they agreed that it was Hebrew, and they proceeded to read it. The translation ran :

"Dear king! please remember how friendly we have been since I allowed you to capture me in the woods. In the town where you live I have a wife who has bewitched me by means of a golden ring. It is a magic ring. If you do not obtain this ring and bring it to me I must remain a wolf all the days of my life. I beseech you to do an act of love and procure this ring, so as to enable me to be restored to my former life. The ring is easy to recognise. It has a plain surface, but inside you will find these words :

'For small price was I sold,
My worth is untold gold!'

"Remember, dear king, that it is to me alone that you owe your life, for I knew full well why you came to the woods when you tried to kill me. Remember."

The king turned to the wolf and patted him on his head, and said : "Good wolf, on my kingly word of honour do I now faithfully promise to spare no effort in trying to fulfil your wish." On his return to his palace he summoned the elders of the Jewish community and told them that he desired their help in an

important matter. "Listen, good friends," said he. "I desire to collect antique and curious rings. Will you go to the houses of all the Jews and buy all such rings, paying a fair price, which I will refund?"

The elders replied: "May it please your Majesty! We are poor and simple people. We do not spend money as a rule in buying useless trinkets. But we know a wealthy Jewess whose husband was a Rabbi. We do not know whether he be alive or dead, but we have heard that she has very many jewels, valuable and rare."

"Take me," exclaimed the king, "to her and I will see what she has."

They went to her house, and the king told them to go to their homes, as he desired to be alone when he examined the jewels. He found the woman at home, and he spoke thus to her: "Good woman! I hear you have all sorts of antique pieces of jewellery. Our gracious king has sent me here to see what you have got, as he desires to collect old and curious rings. You will be paid a good price for all that is purchased."

"I am greatly honoured," she said, "by his gracious Majesty's command, and I am most anxious to obey. Let me go and fetch my

jewel-box, and you shall see all the rings I possess."

On looking through the contents of the jewel-box the king did not find the magic ring. "Have you, good woman," asks the king, "any other rings?"

"Only my silver engagement-ring and my golden wedding-ring, which I keep for safety's sake on my girdle," she answers.

"May I see them?" he inquires.

"Here they are," she replies, and she began to take off her girdle.

The king took hold of the girdle, exclaiming: "This girdle is also, I think, very old."

"Yes," she answers, "it was my great-grandmother's."

Meanwhile he slipped off the magic ring which was also on the girdle and, without her noticing it, put it into his pocket. "Where is your husband?" he asks.

"I do not really know," she replies; "he left me some years ago, and I have heard nothing from him since he left home. I fear he must be dead, poor fellow; he was such a good and kind man."

"I suppose he was very wealthy," he remarks, "since you have so many jewels."

"Yes," she exclaims, "he was very rich and so very charitable."

"I must not forget the rings," he says. "What do you want for the silver engagement-ring, if you are disposed to sell it?"

"I do not mind selling it," she replies; "my price is fifty shillings."

"Good," said he; "here is the money, and I will take this ring and report to his Majesty all I have seen." He then took his leave and departed.

No sooner was he gone than the woman missed her magic ring. She looked all over the room, but in vain. In temper and excitement she ran up and down her room till she fell on the floor in sheer exhaustion. Meanwhile the king hastened to his palace and ordered a court banquet for the same evening. When the banquet was concluded, he ordered his steward to bring the wolf before the royal guests. The wolf came to the king in his most friendly manner. Then the king took the magic ring out of his pocket and placed it on the paw of the wolf. At the same moment the wolf disappeared and in his stead there stood an old man.

"See," cried the guests in astonishment, "what a wonderful transformation are we beholding!"

Everybody present was mightily surprised

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to hear the king say: "This man, who was formerly bewitched, will now tell his tale." They all listened with hushed attention while the Rabbi told them of the magic ring, and how his wicked wife had cast a spell upon him. When he had finished, he asked the king to grant him permission to return home. This was readily accorded. The king desired to give him valuable gifts, but he very politely declined, saying: "Now that I have my magic ring I can obtain all I desire and all I need. I take this opportunity," he added, "of thanking you with all my heart for your great service to me in obtaining this precious ring, which has enabled me to live again as a man among my fellow-creatures. I shall never forget your invaluable help, and I place myself at your Majesty's service as long as I live."

The Rabbi was soon in his own home once more. He gathered around his table all the poor of the town and received a most hearty welcome home from these guests. His disciples also came to him as soon as they heard of his return. They asked him where he had been for such a long period. He replied that he did not wish to talk about the past. "We live in the present and not in the past," he added. He did not find his wife at home on his arrival. Later in

the day, when he heard her footstep outside his house-door, he put the magic ring on his finger and said : " I wish my wife to become a she-ass."

No sooner was the wish expressed than the transformation was effected. Turning to his pupils, he says : " I wonder where my good wife is straying. Will one of you be good enough to go to the house-door and see if she be in the front-garden ? " After a few minutes had elapsed the pupil returned and said : " Rabbi ! I cannot see your wife, but there is a she-ass just outside your door."

" Please go and tie her up in the shed at the end of the garden," says the Rabbi.

" Certainly," replies the disciple, and away he ran to do the will of his teacher.

" This is rather strange," said the Rabbi to his pupils; " my wife seems to have gone away. I only hope she will soon be back. It would never do for her to be away from home as long as I was. Let us only have patience and all will be well."

The good man continued his usual routine of life and gave away more than ever in charity. He now resolved to fulfil a vow that he had made in his earlier days, for he had promised to build a Synagogue if the Almighty would give

him peace and wealth. "Now," said he to himself, "I have both, and I will fulfil my vow and build a Synagogue, the house of prayer and peace." He told his disciples of this intention, and they said to him: "May God bless your work, and may you see the work of your hands established."

The Rabbi directed the builders to fetch timber from the adjoining woods, and he bade them fetch his she-ass to help in the transport of the wood. Of course no one knew that the she-ass was the wicked wife of the kind-hearted Rabbi. At times she was exceedingly obstinate, and the driver plied his whip without mercy. In this way she expiated her past evil life.

When the Synagogue was erected the Rabbi gave a banquet. He invited not only his own relatives but all the family connections of his wife. Whilst they were enjoying the good things of the feast, the Rabbi arose and told them all about the wicked trick which his wife had played him when she bewitched him by means of the magic ring. "Yes," he cried, "it was through her that I became the fierce wolf. Now as a recompense I have changed her into a she-ass."

The guests asked him to have mercy and to change her into a woman again. He declined

to do this, adding: "When she was a woman she behaved like a she-ass, and now she has become a she-ass it is best for her to remain one." In time she died unlamented, for no one really ever loved her. After her death the Rabbi also died in a good old age, honoured and beloved by all who knew him. Since the death of the Rabbi the magic ring has been lost. Maybe one day it will be found again.

Ma'aseh Book (Chap Book), ed. Roedelheim, pp. 75a ff.

THE END

CENTRAL CIRCULATION
CHILDREN'S ROOM

FOR BOYS AND GIRLS UNDER TEN

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MORE ABOUT ELLIE

By Eleanor Verdery Sloan. Illustrated by Edna Potter.

More good times with the little brother and sister of "About Ellie at Sandacre" and "Nip the Pony."

THE TRAVELS OF SAMMIE THE TURTLE

Told and illustrated by Marion Bullard.

Sammie was a turtle who wanted to see the world so he discarded his shell and started forth on his travels. He had many exciting adventures until he finally reached home again. Told with much humor.